(Sent via email to Rep. Doggett)

May 11, 2011

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
U.S. House of Representatives
201 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4310

Dear Congressman Doggett:

On behalf of the 3.2 million members of the National Education Association, we urge your opposition to the Jobs, Opportunity, Benefits and Services (JOBS) Act (H.R. 1745), scheduled for mark-up in the Ways and Means Committee. Contrary to its name, this troubling bill will actually set the stage to wipe out vital support for unemployed workers. Gas and food prices continue to rise, while far too many workers, including educators, still find themselves unemployed. Protecting unemployment insurance is critical to ensuring family stability and, consequently, the well being of thousands of children in our public schools.

Unemployment remains at dangerously high levels, and the percentage of unemployed who have been out of work for more than six-months is at record levels. The national unemployment rate is 9 percent and 22 states have rates even higher. Nine states (including California, Florida, Michigan and Nevada) have unemployment over 10 percent. Congress has never discontinued a federal extension of unemployment benefits when the national unemployment rate was higher than 7.4 percent. Currently over 4.1 million unemployed rely on federal unemployment benefits to survive until they can find another job. For far too many of those workers and their families, those benefits are their only life-line.

Last December, Congress made a fundamental promise to unemployed workers and the nation. The Administration undertook a historic compromise when it agreed to extend Bush-era tax cuts to the wealthiest two percent of Americans. A critical factor in the President's decision to accept the compromise tax deal was the assurance that America's long-term unemployed would have the security of knowing that government was not going to strip them of federal unemployment benefits during 2011 – a time that all forecasters agreed would see a very slow recovery of the labor market. H.R. 1745 would break this promise.

H.R. 1745 gives states the authority to shut down the federal unemployment insurance program. States could then use that money to either repay federal loans that have been supporting state unemployment insurance benefits, or put it into their own state UI trust funds to give employers a cut on their unemployment taxes. In so doing, it undermines the fragile recovery by removing one of the most effective forms of economic stimulus for local

and small businesses, which rely on the unemployed having a source of income to spend on necessities.

Again, we urge your opposition to H.R. 1745.

Sincerely,

Kim Anderson
Director of Government Relations

Mary Kusler
Manager of Federal Advocacy